

Module 2

Working with Diverse Staff & Participants

Table of Contents

Overview	1
What is Culture?.....	2
Cultures Served by WIC.....	3
Why is Culture Important?.....	4
Cultural Competence.....	7
Working with the Participant Whose Culture Differs from Yours.....	9
Communicating with Someone Whose Language You Do Not Speak.....	11
Summary	13
Glossary	15
Progress Check	16
Learning Activities	18
1: What Is Your Culture?.....	19
2: Cultural Beliefs & Behaviors.....	21
3: A Co-Worker's Story.....	23
4: Understanding the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency.....	26
5: Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than Yours.....	30
6: Role Plays.....	33
Progress Check Answers	35

Overview

Introduction

The participants and staff at WIC come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. This module will help you to welcome and appreciate the diversity and differences at WIC.

Learning Objectives

After completing this module, the Community Nutrition Worker (CNW) will be able to:

- Define culture and list 5 examples of elements that make up culture
 - Explain and give examples of how 2 cultures can interpret the same non-verbal cue in a different way
 - Explain how culture affects health and diet behaviors
 - Explain how the first and second generation of a culture may have different beliefs and behaviors related to WIC services
 - Give examples of how cultural factors can impact WIC services
 - Communicate cross-culturally
-

** Words that you may not know are **underlined**. Definitions for these words can be found in the **Glossary** at the end of the module. (Note: Words are only underlined the first few times they appear in the text.)*

What is Culture?

Definition

Culture is:

The shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people.

Elements of Culture

Culture can include:

- race or ethnicity
 - country of origin
 - roles of women and men
 - age
 - religion or spiritual practice
 - language or dialect
 - sexual orientation
 - family structure
 - residence
 - education
 - income
 - profession
 - health status
-

Culture is NOT Just Ethnicity

Culture includes our ethnicity but is **NOT** limited to ethnicity.

For example, you may identify with people who share your ethnic background, but may identify **more** with people who share your religious beliefs.

Multiple Cultures

People often relate to many cultures.

For example, a person may be **Hispanic**, have grown up in **rural** community, **speak only English**, and be a **single mother**. She may identify with at least 4 cultures.

Cultures Served by WIC

Types of Cultures

WIC serves people of many cultures. The chart that follows gives you a list of some of these cultures and an example of each.

Type	Description <i>People of this culture identify with people who:</i>	Example
Age	Are similar in age	Teenagers
Country of Origin	Were born or grew up in the same country	Laotian immigrants
Ethnicity	Are of the same ethnic background	Chinese Americans
Family Structure	Have a similar family makeup	Single mothers
Gender	Are of the same sex	Male WIC participants
Health Status	Have a similar health condition	People who have diabetes
Income	Make about the same amount of money	TANF recipients
Language	Speak the same language	Spanish-speaking participants
Religion	Share the same religion	Seventh Day Adventists
Residence	Live in the same area	People living in a migrant camp
Work	Do similar work	CNWs

Learning Activity 1

To learn more about your culture, you may want to try **Learning Activity 1** found at the end of this module.

Why Is Culture Important?

A Design for Living

Culture gives people a design for living. It is a group's:

- Assumptions about the world
- Goals and meanings of life
- Views about what is right and what is wrong
- Views of what is important and what is not
- Beliefs about how to behave and how to expect others to behave

(adapted from a definition by Noel Day, Polaris Research and Development, San Francisco)

Culture helps people structure their community and family life.

Culture Affects Belief, Values, & Behaviors

A person's culture often determines her/his:

- beliefs
 - values
 - behaviors
-

Beliefs

Beliefs are what a person views as true in life and/or death.

For example, Buddhists believe that suffering is part of life.

Values

Values are what a person sees as important or meaningful in life.

For example, many people in the United States value time and see "time as money."

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Why Is Culture Important? (Continued)

Behaviors

Behaviors are what a person does.

For example, exercising is a healthy behavior.

Culture Affects Health Behaviors

Culture greatly affects our health decisions. It can affect our behaviors about:

- Diet and nutrition
 - Pregnancy
 - Breastfeeding
 - Alcohol and drug use
 - Family planning
 - Health care
-

Examples of How Culture Affects Health

The chart on the next page shows some examples of how culture can affect health and nutrition beliefs and behaviors.

Learning Activity 2

To learn more about how culture affects our health beliefs and behaviors, you may want to try **Learning Activity 2** found at the end of this module.

Why Is Culture Important? (Continued)

Examples of How Culture Affects Health & Nutrition

Topic	Example
Diet And Nutrition	In Chinese cooking, tofu (bean curd) is used more often than milk or milk products.
Pregnancy	In some Southeast Asian cultures, teen pregnancy is considered the norm.
Breastfeeding	In some immigrant cultures, breastfeeding is viewed as something only poor people do.
Alcohol And Drug Use	In Seventh Day Adventist and Mormon cultures, alcohol is never used.
Family Planning	In many cultures, talking about personal matters (such as sex) is seen as disrespectful and, thus, birth control is not talked about.
Health Care	In Christian Scientist culture, children are NOT immunized.

Cultural Competence

Definition

Cultural competence is the ability to communicate comfortably and effectively with people of different cultures.

Culturally competent people:

- Have an open attitude toward others who are different from themselves
 - Are willing to learn new information and skills from people of other cultures
 - Communicate in ways that are sensitive to the needs of people of other cultures
 - Are willing to share information about cultural experiences
-

Having an Open Attitude

Culturally competent people have an open attitude toward others who are different from them. Having an open attitude means being **non-judgmental** when someone has beliefs or practices that differ from yours.

Willing to Learn New Information & Skills

Culturally competent people are willing to learn new information and skills from people of other cultures. You can develop cultural competence by becoming familiar with the customs, beliefs, and values of the people you work with and serve at WIC. You can do this by:

- Talking to your friends, neighbors, and co-workers from other cultures
 - Attending cultural events such as special festivals and celebrations
 - Eating at different ethnic restaurants
 - Reading about other cultures
 - Paying attention to local news stories that focus on cultural issues
-

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Cultural Competence (Continued)

Communicating in A Sensitive Way

Culturally competent people communicate in ways that are sensitive to the needs of people of other cultures. They make sure that the words, language, posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language they use are appropriate for the culture of the person with whom they are communicating.

Sharing Cultural Experiences

Culturally competent people are willing to share information about cultural experiences. They realize that we develop cultural competence through a variety of experiences and that learning about and appreciating our cultural diversity is an ongoing process.

Learning Activity 3

To learn more about the cultures of the people you work with, you may want to try **Learning Activity 3** found at the end of this module.

Working with the Participant Whose Cultural Background Differs from Yours

WIC Serves Many Different People

At WIC you will meet many different people. You may meet people who have different customs, beliefs, values, attitudes, language, education, and experiences from yours.

Communication Can Be Difficult

Communicating with people of different cultures can be difficult. Even with the best intentions, you may make some mistakes in communicating with people whose background is different from your own.

Some Characteristics to Keep in Mind

The chart on the next page may help you understand the diversity among Arizona's participant population. It lists some characteristics that may differ among cultures. Keep these in mind when communicating with people who may not share your cultural background.

Never Make Assumptions

Beliefs differ between groups and within groups. Do NOT make assumptions. A person's beliefs can change with age, new experiences, new generations, and new information. Only by asking will you know what a person believes!

For example, people from certain Asian cultures may not eat a lot of dairy products, but we cannot assume that every individual from that cultural group does not eat dairy.

Learning Activity 4

To learn more about how to communicate with people of various cultures, you may want to try **Learning Activity 4** found at the end of this module.

Working with the Participant Whose Cultural Background Differs from Yours (continued)

Some Characteristics to Keep in Mind

Characteristic	Suggestions
Social Structure (a culture's views on a person's place in the group or family)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware of a person's place in the group or family.• Be aware of who and how you talk to people in the family. Cultures differ in how they want to be addressed. (For example, do not compliment the participant's child unless you know this is culturally appropriate.)
Concept of Time (a culture's views about time and its importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware that not all cultures are time conscious and see "time as money."• Explain the importance of being on time for appointments.
Expressions (a culture's way of expressing feelings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware that some cultures are expressive & direct, while others are quiet & indirect.• Use humor carefully; humor is difficult to understand & differs by culture.• Do not touch a participant or a participant's child unless you know the person would not be offended by your touch. This includes handshakes.• Do not point with your index finger or beckon with a curled finger. This is considered rude in some cultures.

Communicating with Someone Whose Language You Do Not Speak

In Arizona

In Arizona many of our WIC participants may speak little or no English. CNWs are often hired to help participants who speak little or no English.

Communicating with Limited English Speaking Participants

If you do not speak the participant's native language, then you will need to learn some ways to communicate with limited English speaking participants.

For limited English speaking participants, use the guidelines listed on the next page.

Avoid Situations that Exclude Others

A staff person should be careful in speaking a language that a participant or co-worker does not understand. S/he should use that language as needed but not in a way that others may feel excluded.

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Communicating with Someone Whose Language You Do Not Speak (continued)

Guidelines for Communication

DO:	DO NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen carefully.• Show your face and lips when speaking.• Speak slowly.• Speak clearly.• Focus on the main points.• Use words that the participant uses.• Write down words when spoken words are not working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use words that the participant does not know.• Use slang, jargon or abbreviations.• Use contractions such as “wouldn’t” for “would not.”• Use words that have a negative meaning such as “barely” or “hardly.”

Summary

Culture

Culture is the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people.

Elements of Culture

Culture can include:

- race or ethnicity
 - country of origin
 - roles of women and men
 - age
 - religion or spiritual practice
 - language or dialect
 - sexual orientation
 - family structure
 - residence
 - education
 - income
 - profession
 - health status
-

Culture Affects Health Behaviors

Culture can affect our beliefs and behaviors about:

- diet and nutrition
 - pregnancy
 - breastfeeding
 - alcohol and drug use
 - family planning
 - health care
-

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Summary (continued)

Cultural Competence

Culturally competent people:

- Have an open attitude toward others who are different from themselves
 - Are willing to learn new information and skills from people of others cultures
 - Communicate in ways that are sensitive to the needs of people of other cultures
 - Are willing to share information about cultural experiences
-

DRAFT

Glossary

cultural competence- Cultural competence is the ability to communicate comfortably and effectively with people of different cultures.

cultural diversity- Cultural diversity is the variety of cultures that exist in a particular place.

culture- Culture is the shared values, belief, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people. Culture can include race or ethnicity, country of origin, roles of women and men, age, religion or spiritual practice, language or dialect, sexual orientation, family structure, residence, education, income, profession, and/or health status.

diversity- Diversity usually refers to cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is the variety of cultures that exist in a particular place.

non-verbal cue- A non-verbal cue is a message that does not use words. Non-verbal cues can include facial expression, posture or eye contact.

role play- A role play is when 2 or more people act out a scene as though it was "real life." "Props" such as baby dolls or food models are not needed but may be helpful.

Progress Check

1. Mark the following as “True” or “False”.

- _____ Culture is the shared values, belief, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people.
- _____ Culture does NOT include your ethnicity.
- _____ A participant may relate more with her religious background than her ethnic background.
- _____ Pregnant teens are a culture served by WIC.
- _____ A person may identify with many cultures.

2. Put a check mark before any of the cultures usually served by WIC.

- _____ pregnant women
- _____ senior citizens
- _____ single mothers
- _____ male business executives
- _____ infants
- _____ breastfeeding women
- _____ 10-year old children

Progress Check (continued)

3. List 5 elements of culture.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

4. Give 2 non-verbal cues that could have different meanings, dependent on the culture.

1.

2.

5. Mark the following as "TRUE" or "FALSE".

_____ Humor is the same in all cultures.

_____ Culture helps people understand their world.

_____ Showing emotions, such as crying, is acceptable behavior in all cultures.

_____ You can assume that all generations of a culture have the same beliefs and values.

_____ When communicating with someone who speaks a different language than you, speak slowly, clearly, and focus on the main points.

_____ All cultures agree that "time is money."

_____ When counseling a participant, it is important to compliment her child.

Learning Activities

The following activities are included and are recommended for interactive learning:

- Learning Activity 1: What Is Your Culture?
- Learning Activity 2: Cultural Beliefs & Behaviors
- Learning Activity 3: A Co-Worker's Story
- Learning Activity 4: Understand the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency
- Learning Activity 5: Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than Yours
- Learning Activity 6: Role Plays

Activity 1: What Is Your Culture?

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the CNW will be able to:

- Identify some aspects of her/his culture
- Identify some commonalities and differences of her/his culture with that of participants

Background

Culture is the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people. Culture can include race or ethnicity, country of origin, roles of women and men, age, religion or spiritual practice, language or dialect, sexual orientation, family structure, residence, education, income, profession, and /or health status.

A person may relate to many cultures. You may identify with a particular ethnic group, age group, place of residence, religion and/or other element of culture.

Instructions

1. This activity is designed to help you think more broadly about culture. Be aware that it may bring up feelings about your background or how you have been treated.
2. Using what you have learned, complete the form on the next page.
3. After completing the form, think about the different cultures that you belong to. With how many cultures do you identify?
4. How are you the **same as** a WIC participant who may come to your WIC site? What cultures do you share? How are you **different?**
5. You may want to discuss what you learned with your supervisor.

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Activity 1: What Is Your Culture? (Continued)

1. Where were you born? (city & country)
2. Where do you live? (describe the neighborhood)
3. What's your family ethnicity or heritage ?
4. What's one thing in your life that you are proud of?
5. What's your favorite food ?
6. When was the first time you felt different ?
7. Describe a health practice or diet message you learned from your family.
8. Describe a nutrition or diet message you learned from your family.
9. Describe a belief you now have that differs from your family's beliefs.

Activity 2: Cultural Beliefs & Behaviors

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the CNW will be able to:

- Explain how culture can affect health and diet behaviors

Background

Culture greatly affects our health beliefs and behaviors. It can affect our beliefs and behaviors about:

- Diet and nutrition
- Pregnancy
- Breastfeeding
- Alcohol and drug use
- Family planning
- Health care

A cultural group shares many beliefs and behaviors. These are often repeated and passed down from one generation to another. However, time and new information may change some of these beliefs and behaviors. Our beliefs and behaviors may be very different from our parents.

Instructions

1. Think back to when you were growing up. Think about your family's beliefs on diet and nutrition, pregnancy, breastfeeding, alcohol and drug use, family planning, and health care.
2. Complete the form on the next page.
3. Read over your answers. How were some of your family's beliefs the **same** as those of the participants we serve at WIC? How were they **different**?

Activity 2: Cultural Beliefs & Behaviors (Continued)

1. When you were growing up, what were your family's views/beliefs about:

a. Nutrition and healthy eating?

b. Who should prepare the food?

c. Pregnancy?

d. Breastfeeding?

e. Family planning?

2. How are your beliefs/views the **same** or **different** from those of your family's?

3. How did the cost of food affect what and where your family ate?

4. What is the current role of women in your culture? What is the current role of men? Have these roles changed since you were a child?

Activity 3: A Co-Worker's Story

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the CNW will be able to:

- Identify how our past experiences influence our current beliefs and behaviors
-

Instructions

1. Arrange to interview 2 co-workers.
 2. Interview each co-worker on 1 to 6 topics:
 - Diet and nutrition
 - Pregnancy
 - Breastfeeding
 - Alcohol and drug use
 - Family planning
 - Health care
 3. Use the form on the next page as a guide. You may want to write down some notes on this form.
 4. Your co-worker may think of “culture” as her/his ethnic group, gender, immediate family or a combination of these or other elements that make up who s/he is.
 5. Did you make any assumptions before talking to your co-worker? If so, did your views change during or after the interview?
-

Activity 3: A Co-Worker's Story (Continued)

Co-Worker's Name: _____	TOPIC: <input type="checkbox"/> diet/nutrition <input type="checkbox"/> pregnancy <input type="checkbox"/> breastfeeding <input type="checkbox"/> family planning <input type="checkbox"/> alcohol/drug use <input type="checkbox"/> health care
1. What did you learn from your "culture" about this topic?	
2. What "advice" (traditions, rules, taboos) was given to you by your "culture" regarding this topic?	
3. Has this "advice" changed since you were growing up? If so, how?	
4. How does your experience about this topic affect your work at WIC?	
5. How do you handle differences in your beliefs about this topic with others?	

Activity 3: A Co-Worker's Story (Continued)

Co-Worker's Name: _____	TOPIC: <input type="checkbox"/> diet/nutrition <input type="checkbox"/> pregnancy <input type="checkbox"/> breastfeeding <input type="checkbox"/> family planning <input type="checkbox"/> alcohol/drug use <input type="checkbox"/> health care
1. What did you learn from your "culture" about this topic?	
2. What "advice" (traditions, rules, taboos) was given to you by your "culture" regarding this topic?	
3. Has this "advice" changed since you were growing up? If so, how?	
4. How does your experience about this topic affect your work at WIC?	
5. How do you handle differences in your beliefs about this topic with others?	

Activity 4: Understanding the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the CNW will be able to:

- Better understand the cultures served by her/his WIC agency

Background

It is important that you become familiar with the variety of cultures served by your WIC agency. Being aware of the diverse needs of participants will help you to provide more effective services!

Instructions

1. Choose 3 cultures your WIC agency serves. Keep in mind that culture is NOT just ethnicity. For example, you may choose **teenagers** or **new immigrants** if your agency serves these cultures.
2. Complete the chart (found on the next few pages) for each cultural group. Make sure to talk to someone from each of these cultures. You may also want to talk to your co-workers, friends, or family members for information.
3. Remember that the information you gather will be true for some but not all participants of the group. The information will help to guide you but you should always treat each participant as an individual!

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**Activity 4: Understanding the Cultures
Served by Your WIC Agency (Continued)**

Name of Culture:		
TOPIC	BELIEFS/VIEWS	DO'S & DON'TS
Nutrition/Diet		
Pregnancy		
Breastfeeding		
Parenting		
Family Planning		
Health Care		
Other important information about this culture:		

Activity 4: Understanding the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency (Continued)

Name of Culture:		
TOPIC	BELIEFS/VIEWS	DO'S & DON'TS
Nutrition/Diet		
Pregnancy		
Breastfeeding		
Parenting		
Family Planning		
Health Care		
Other important information about this culture:		

continued on next page

Activity 4: Understanding the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency (Continued)

Name of Culture:		
TOPIC	BELIEFS/VIEWS	DO'S & DON'TS
Nutrition/Diet		
Pregnancy		
Breastfeeding		
Parenting		
Family Planning		
Health Care		
Other important information about this culture:		

Activity 5: Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than Yours

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the CNW will be able to:

- Communicate, with the help of an interpreter, with a participant whose language is different than her/his language.

Background

Some of the participants in WIC either do not speak English or have limited English speaking skills. For non-English speaking participants, your agency will most likely use someone who speaks their language.

Sometimes a WIC agency uses an interpreter; this person translates what the participant says into the language of the staff person and then translates what the staff person says back into the language of the participant. If you are working as an interpreter, make sure you:

- Translate as closely as possible to the meaning of what is said
- Check to make sure the participant understands what is being said

Instructions

1. This activity will help you understand how your agency handles non-English or limited English speaking participants.
2. Interview your mentor or supervisor. Ask her/him to explain how your agency handles non-English or limited English speakers.

continued on next page

Activity 5: Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than Yours (Continued)

Instructions (continued)

-
3. After you have learned about your agency's procedures, observe:
 - a. A co-worker counseling a **non-English speaking** participant
 - b. A co-worker counseling a **limited English speaking** participant.
 4. Note your agency's procedures and any tips for communicating with non-English speaking or limited English speaking participants on the form on the next page.
-

Activity 5: Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than Yours (Continued)

Procedure for Communicating with:	
Non-English Speaking Participants	Limited English Speaking Participants
Tips for Communicating with:	
Non-English Speaking Participant	Limited English Speaking Participant

Activity 6: Role Plays

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the CNW will be able to:

- Communicate cross-culturally more effectively
-

Background

Cultural competence is the ability to communicate comfortably and effectively with people of different cultures.

Instructions

1. Ask your mentor, supervisor, or a co-worker to role-play 3 of the 5 roles (A-E) described on the following page.
 2. Using the information you have learned about cultural diversity, act out the role of a WIC CNW for each of the 3 situations.
 3. Supervisor/Co-Worker: Using the role-plays as your guide, act out the role of the participant. Try to be as realistic as possible.
 4. After each session, ask your co-worker to tell you what she noticed. Make sure to ask for your strengths as well as weaknesses.
-

Activity 6: Role Plays (continued)

**Role Play
A**

Juanita Garcia recently emigrated from Puerto Rico. This is her first visit to your WIC site. She uses a non-verbal wrinkling of her nose to mean “What?” (Wrinkling of the nose is a non-verbal cue often used by Puerto Ricans to show they do not understand, but you do not know this.)

**Role Play
B**

Amy Chang is first generation Taiwanese. Her 3-year old recently had food poisoning. She is worried that something similar will happen to her 6-month old. However, she shows no emotions--- not even when you ask her about her 3-year old!

**Role Play
C**

Kim Nguyen is a 17-year old pregnant woman recently emigrated from Vietnam. She has 2 young children. She has followed her culture’s custom of marrying young. She speaks limited English and you do not speak Vietnamese.

**Role Play
D**

Terry Monroe is a pregnant drug user. She tells you she “shoots up” regularly and shows you the “track” marks on her arms. She tells you she has been living on the “streets” and that she works as a prostitute. She says she is worried about her baby.

**Role Play
E**

Mary Jersey tells you that she does not eat meat. (She is a Seventh Day Adventist.) She also tells you that she was offended by the pamphlet that she got at her last visit. (It referred to eating meat.) She does not feel respected and shows this by her body language.

Progress Check Answers

1. Mark the following as “TRUE” or “FALSE”.

TRUE Culture is the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people.

FALSE Culture does NOT include our ethnicity.

TRUE A participant may relate more with her religious background than her ethnic background.

TRUE Pregnant teens are a culture served by WIC.

TRUE A person may identify with many cultures.

2. Put a check mark before any of the cultures usually served by WIC.

☒ pregnant women

☐ senior citizens

☒ single mothers

☐ male business executives

☒ infants

☒ breastfeeding women

☐ 10-year old children

Progress Check Answers (continued)

3. List 5 elements of culture.

Answers may include any of the 5 below:

race or ethnicity, country of origin, role of women and men, age, religion or spiritual practice, language or dialect, sexual orientation, family structure, residence, education, income, profession, health status

4. Give 2 non-verbal cues that could have different meanings dependent on the culture.

Answers may vary. Answers may include:

Eye contact, handshakes, pointing or other hand signs

5. Mark the following as “TRUE” or “FALSE”.

FALSE Humor is the same in all cultures.

TRUE Culture helps people understand their world.

FALSE Showing emotions, such as crying, is acceptable behavior in all cultures.

FALSE You can assume that all generations of a culture have the same beliefs and values.

TRUE When communicating with someone who speaks a different language than you, speak slowly, clearly and focus on the main points.

FALSE All cultures agree that “time is money.”

FALSE When counseling a participant, it is important to compliment her child.